

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEHRAN 01474 141345Z
ACTION SS-25

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

AMEMBASSY VICORIA

S E C R E T TEHRAN 1474

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MORG PK KE IR BA MU SA MP

SUBJ: MIDDLE EAST FORCE - THE NEW FORMAT

REF: STATE 030235

1. AS BACKGROUND TO ASSESSMENT BELOW IT SEEMS USEFUL TO RECALL THAT IRAN'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS MIDEASTFOR HAS BEEN, IN ALL SUSTANTIAL RESPECTS, CONSISTENT FROM THE OUTSET. THE GOI HAS NEVER PUBLICLY SUPPORTED MIDEASTFOR. AT THE SAME TIME, THE GOI HAS NEVER PUBLICLY OBJECTED TO THE BAHRAIN HOMEPORTING OF MIDEASTFOR. HOWEVER, THE SHAH HAS MADE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR, NUMEROUS TIMES, HIS SKEPTICISM; MOST COGENTLY PERHAPS IN HIS CHRISTIAN

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 TEHRAN 01474 141345Z

SCIENCE MONITOR INTERVIEW OF LAST JANUARY WHEN HE SAID:

"I DON'T THINK THAT THERE IS ANY REAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THAT--ONLY TO SHOW THE FLAG. BUT YOU CAN SHOW THE FLAG ONCE IN AWHILE BY SENDING IN A FEW SHIPS. YOU HAVE ONLY ONE OR TWO LITTLE TIN BOATS THERE." IN SUM, AS WE HAVE REPORTED, THE IRANIAN VIEW HAS BEEN THAT MIDEASTFOR WAS NOT SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO BE WORTH

DISAGREEMENT WITH OTHER PERSIAN GULF STATES OR POSSIBLE SOVIET REACTION IN THE AREA.

2. WITH RESPECT TO POSSIBLE GOI WILLINGNESS "TO COME OUT WITH A PUBLIC STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR BAHRAIN'S MAINTENANCE OF MIDEASTFOR PRESENCE" (PARA 11 REFTEL), THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THE SHAH WOULD BE PREPARED NOW TO CHANGE THE IRANIAN POSITION AGAINST PUBLICLY SUPPORTING A MIDEASTFOR HOMEPORTED IN BAHRAIN.

3. AS FOR AN ARRANGEMENT INVOLVING MORE NUMEROUS, EXTENDED VISITS BY MIDEASTFOR FLAGSHIP, WE ARE REASONABLY CONFIDENT THAT GOI AGREEMENT COULD BE OBTAINED FOR THIS SO LONG AS SUCH A CHANGE WERE EFFECTED QUIETLY, WITHOUT PUBLICITY.

4. IN THAT CONNECTION, IF THE US AIM IS MERELY TO CONTINUE A PERMANENT SHIP PRESENCE IN THE AREA UNDER THE MIDEASTFOR LABEL, WITH THE LACK OF HOMEPORTING THE ONLY SUBSTANTIAL DIFFERENCE FROM THE CURRENT SITUATION, THEN WE BELIEVE THE CHANCES OF GOI AGREEMENT WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED. ALTERNATIVELY, IF THE US AIM IS TO DO AWAY WITH MIDEASTFOR WHEN THE HOMEPORTING ARRANGEMENT IN BAHRAIN ENDS IN JUNE, AND TO SWITCH TO A NEW SITUATION INVOLVING EXTENSION TO THE PERSIAN GULF OF THE US SHIP VISIT POLICY FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN, NAMELY, THROUGH ROUTINE DEPLOYMENTS TO CONDUCT NORMAL NAVAL OPERATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS TO INCLUDE PERIODIC SHIP OPERATIONS IN THE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 TEHRAN 01474 141345Z

INDIAN OCEAN (TO BE EXTENDED TO INCLUDE THE PERSIAN GULF), THEN WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOI WOULD AGREE.

5. THUS, THE CURRENT MIDEASTFOR ARRANGEMENTS COULD SIMPLY BE PERMITTED TO TERMINATE THIS SUMMER, WITHOUT FANFARE. AGREEMENT COULD BE SOUGHT TO SUPPORT PORT VISITS ALONG LINES NUMBER AND DURATION OUTLINED PARA 8 REFTEL AS FUNCTION OF SHIP VISIT POLICY CONTAINED LAST SENTENCE PARA 4 ABOVE. PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICITY COULD BE HANDLED IN SAME ROUTINE WAY NOW PRACTICED FOR INDIAN OCEAN DEPLOYMENTS AND PORT VISITS. THIS WOULD BE FAR MORE PALATABLE TO GOI (AND WE SUSPECT OTHER COUNTRIES INVOLVED), AND WOULD SEEM TO MEET US SUBSTANTIVE INTERESTS. IT IS POSSIBLE ALSO THAT IT WOULD BE LESS COSTLY TO US FROM THE STANDPOINT OF QUID PRO QUO BARGAINING. IN THAT REGARD, WE WOULD NOT EXPECT THE GOI TO SEEK A QUID PRO QUO UNLESS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE NEW US SECURITY ASSISTANCE POLICY CURRENTLY BEING DEVELOPED DRAMATICALLY CHANGES THE US

APPROACH TO IRAN IN THIS AREA. SHOULD SUCH OCCUR
IT WOULD, WE BELIEVE, INEVITABLY INVOLVE A BROAD
GOI REASSESSMENT OF ITS RELATIONS WITH THE US,
WHICH AMONG OTHER THINGS WOULD IMPACT ON THE GOI
ATTITUDE TOWARDS SHIP VISITS.
MIKLOS

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